MONOGRAPH

ON

THE POTTERY AND GLASSWARE OF BURMA,

1894-95,

BY

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GOVT. TRANSLATOR AND HONY. ARCHÆOLOGICAL OFFICER, BURMA.

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I.—POTTERY.

THE derivation of the term *pottery* in Burmese has some signification as it shows to some extent whence the art was introduced or how it was affected or modified by foreign influences. The Burmese word "O"—pronounced with the heavy tone—cannot be derived from an Indian language because in the two Indian classical languages, namely, Sanskrit and Pâli, which have most affected Burmese literature and art, the word *pot* is expressed by *kumbha,* from which *Kumhar*, or *Kumar*, the caste of potters, is evidently derived. In the Chinese language, on the other hand, which is split up into several dialects, the word "Huo,' with its variants, *O* (Wênchow), *Oh* (Ningpo), occurs.* It means a caldron; a boiler; an iron pan. Again, the Burmese word "In"—pronounced *an* or *ang* in Arakan and Tavoy—means a vessel with a wide mouth. In Chinese the word "an"† means a bowl, and "ang"‡ a basin; a tureen. In Amoy as well as in Tavoy a water-jar is called an "ang." The term *pottery* is expressed in Burmese by "O-in" or "O-ang," *i.e.*, pots and pans. It is interesting to note that the Burmese word "O" cannot be derived from the Shan or Tibetan language. From the facts stated above, it may be inferred that the art of pottery, as practised in Burma, is of

Derivation of the Burmese word "O."

* Giles' Chinese-English Dictionary, page 540, Character No. 5308.

† Character No. 46, page 6, *ibid.*

‡ Character No. 78, page 7, *ibid.*

Chinese* origin, that it has been affected by Brahmanic and Buddhistic influences from India, and that its introduction was prior to the establishment of Buddhism on Burmese soil.

History of pottery in Burma.

2. Pottery in Burma mainly consists of earthenware, as stoneware and porcelain may now be said to be almost unknown. The introduction of earthenware pottery is buried in the dim past, but as stated above, it may be surmised that, like the civilization, religion, literature, and other arts of the Burmese people, it was imported in converging channels from India and China, the two centres of civilization, which stood to Eastern Asia in the same relation as Greece and Rome did to the Western world. The medium of intercourse was Buddhism, which was introduced into Ceylon and Indo-China in the 3rd century B. C. and into Tibet and China in 65 A. D. The community of faith thus established doubtless promoted commerce and effected an interchange of thoughts and ideas. The political society created on the model of the religious organization of Buddhism imposed peace and order and afforded leisure and facilities for the cultivation of science and art. In the middle ages the maritime provinces of Burma, namely, Arakan, Pegu, and Tenasserim, were influenced by Bengal, the Coromandel Coast, Ceylon, and Cambodia, while the upper valley of the Irrawaddy lay under obligation to Northern India, Tibet, and China; and the converging streams of influence from the Indian and Chinese centres of civilization finally coalesced at Pagan under King Anawrata in the 11th century A. D.

3. The ceramic art did not achieve any public recognition in Europe till the 16th century A. D.; but long before that period the pottery of Burma had become famous. Ibn Batuta,†

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* *Remarkable discoveries in Egypt.*

"Professor E. Hull, LL.D., F.R.S., late Director-General of the Geological Survey of Ireland, took the chair the other day at the Midsummer Meeting of the Victoria Institute, in London, England.

* * * *

After the discussion, Captain Petrie, the Honorary Secretary, read two interesting communications in regard to the intercourse of nations in early times, showing that there was not only evidence of the existence of a land trade 3,000 years ago from India westward, but also of trade by sea between the ports of India and Ceylon and Alexandria, by way of the Red Sea. During the meeting a *vase with an archaic Chinese inscription* was exhibited. It had been found with a mummy in a tomb discovered by Dr. Reichardt, an archæologist long resident in Egypt, and three archæological friends."—Extract from the *Rangoon Gazette* of the 30th July 1895, p. 11.

† Cited in Yule's *Hobson-Jobson* under article 'Martaban,' page 428.

the celebrated Arabian traveller, who flourished in the 14th century A. D., relates in the account of his voyages—

"Then the Princess made me a present, consisting of dresses, of two elephant-loads of rice, of two she-buffaloes, ten sheep, four *rotls* of cordial syrup, and four MARTABANS, or huge jars, filled with pepper, citron, and mango, all prepared with salt, as for a sea-voyage."

4. These celebrated jars were made in Martaban, which is now a small insignificant village in the Amherst district.

"1516. 'In this town of MARTABAN are made very large and beautiful porcelain vases, and some of glazed earthenware of a black colour, which are highly valued among the Moors, and they export them as merchandise.' "—*Barbosa, 185.**

5. There is no doubt that the Martabans of the Panjab, mentioned at page 287 of Mukharji's "*Art Manufactures of India*" are the lineal descendants of the glazed pottery of Martaban.

"1598. 'In this town many of the great earthen pots are made, which in India are called MARTAUANAS, and many of them carried throughout all India of all sortes, both small and great; some are so great that they will hold full two pipes of water. The cause why so many are brought into India is that they use them in every house, and in their shippes instead of caskes' "—*Linschoten*, page 30. †

6. Martaban, or—to give it its classical appellation—Muttimamandala, was one of the three recognized divisions of the ancient empire of the Môns or Talaings, the other two being Hamsâvatîmandala or Pegu, and Kusimamandala or Bassein. Bassein is still noted for its pottery, and its fancy pottery will be noticed later on. Pegu pottery is now represented by Twante, a village a few miles to the south-west of Rangoon. One of the most important sea-ports of Râmañña*d*esa, or the country of the Talaings, in the 16th and 17th centuries was Taikkalâ now identified with Ayetthèma village in the Thatôn district. It is the Takkala of Professor Lassen's map and the Go*l*amattikanagara of the Kalyâ*n*î Inscriptions of Pegu, which were erected by King Dhammachetî in 1476 A. D. As the name implies, it was colonized by the Gau*d*as of the ancient city of Gaur in Bengal. On the site of this historic Taikkalâ, which is now about 12 miles from the sea-shore, traces of a wall and moat still exist, and fragments of pottery and glazed tiles are found. In the Kalyâ*n*î Inscriptions ‡ alluded to above, which record the despatch of a religious

* Cited in Yule's *Hobson-Jobson* under article 'Martaban,' p. 428.
† *Ibid.*
‡ *A preliminary study of the Kalyâ*n*î Inscriptions of Dhammachetî, 1476 A. D.*, reprinted from the *Indian Antiquary* (Bombay, 1893), p. 20.

mission to Ceylon by King Dhammachetî, the following passage occurs:—

"For presenting to the Mahâtheras of Sîha*l*adîpa (Ceylon) the following articles were prepared,—40 boxes containing cotton cloth of delicate texture; 20 silk and cotton upper robes of various colours, namely, red, yellow, motley, and white; 20 betel-boxes of motley colour, manufactured in Haribhuñja (Chiengmai); *four stone pitchers*; *eight painted pitchers* manufactured in CHINADESA; and 20 fans manufactured in CHINADESA."

This extract indicates that, in the 15th century, the art of pottery was practised in the Talaing country and that ceramic utensils were imported from China.

Its future outlook.

7. It is a truism that the taste, refinement, and culture of a people are faithfully reflected in their domestic arts, such as pottery. In Burma, owing to climatic conditions, the wants of the people are few, and the scope of development of the æsthetic taste is restricted by spasmodic political upheavals and the consequent absence of a hereditary leisured and propertied class. The practice of the ceramic art is, therefore, in a low condition, and Burma does not now possess any pottery comparable with that of Sindh or Delhi. Besides, the advent of British rule, with its attendant utilitarian tendencies at the sacrifice of colour and display, has produced a depressing effect on most indigenous arts, which used to be maintained by the barbaric splendour of Oriental Courts. There is, moreover, no hereditary caste * of potters to conserve and develope the art on traditional lines, and the demand for pottery has been diminished. Unlike in India pottery does not enter largely into ceremonial and religious observances; nor is it deemed unclean to make repeated use of the same articles of earthenware as receptacles of food and drink, thereby necessitating the frequent securing of fresh supplies. There are also other causes at work. The price of clay has been increased in most deltaic districts, and the taxation on firewood has rendered the calling scarcely remunerative. Lead, which is largely used in colouring and glazing, is now a contraband article under the Indian Arms Act, and potters are precluded from using it in a pure state. The combination of these causes and the enhanced

* "Moreover, the Code of Manu has secured in the village system of India a permanent endowment of the class of hereditary artisans and art workmen, who of themselves constitute a vast population; and the mere touch of their fingers, trained for 3,000 years to the same manipulations, is sufficient to transform whatever foreign work is placed for imitation in their hands 'into something rich and strange' and characteristically Indian."—Birdwood's *Industrial Arts of India*, Part I, p. 130.

value of unskilled labour in the rice and other trades have withdrawn a large number of people from the industry, and this condition of things has conduced to the increased importation of cheap chinaware from Europe and elsewhere. For the reasons enumerated above, the future outlook of pottery in Burma is rather gloomy, but for the present the prevailing economic conditions must be left to adjust themselves. If, however, labour, capital, and enterprise can be organized according to Western methods and the industry pursued according to Western science as in Bengal and other parts of India, hopes may be entertained that the art of pottery may yet be rescued from its impending doom of decadence and eventual extinction.

Centres of the industry:

8. The art of pottery is practised only during the dry-weather months, that is to say, from December till the end of March. In the rainy season the potters follow other occupations and mostly agriculture. In the rice-growing districts of the Irrawaddy delta, Pegu, Twante in Hanthawaddy, and Bassein are the chief centres. Pegu is noted for its domestic pottery, and Twante * for its glazed ware. The figures 1 and 2 are those of vessels now called "Pegu jars," which are manufactured at the latter place. They are apparently of the same shape and size as the celebrated "Martabans" referred to above, which are the prototypes of the "Martabans" still made in Upper India. The vases and goblets or *sarais* manufactured at Bassein (Figs. 3 and 4) possess some artistic merit. Flower-pots recalling somewhat the *trisul* emblem of Buddhism (Figs. 5 and 6) are made in Bassein town, where the double potter's wheel is in use. It is to be regretted that no reports from Arakan have been received. Arakanese pottery would, no doubt, indicate traces of influence from India, and especially from Bengal. In the Tenasserim division, the sparseness of population and backwardness of trade are somewhat compensated by the fineness and elegance of the pottery manufactured at Tavoy and Papun. Owing to its isolated geographical position, Tavoy was, in past times, a haven of refuge during political disturbances. Its people speak an ancient dialect of Burmese and some of their customs and institutions are quaint and interesting. The goblets of Tavoy (Figs. 7, 8, and 9) are justly famous in the province. Their colour is black, and they keep the water deliciously cool. The

(*a*) Lower Burma.

* U Po, K.S.M., retired Extra Assistant Commissioner, told me that in 1873, when he was Township Officer of Twante, he discovered traces of porcelain kilns in its neighbourhood.

goblet shown in Fig. 8 has to be filled with water from the bottom, which is provided with a funnel-shaped aperture. The water is decanted through the horn-like spout. The funeral urn shown in Fig. 10 is of some interest. For utility, fineness, and elegance, the pottery manufactured by Shans at Papun is unrivalled throughout the province, and it is a pity that its sale is not extensive because it is not widely known on account of the comparative inaccessibility of the Salween district. The report for the Salween district is appended below *in extenso*:—

"The clay used for pottery manufacture is found at Mètharut chaung about ½ mile from Papun. It is of a bluish black colour when taken from the stream, but turns red when burnt, unless the green dye is put on, when it turns to the colour in Sheet No. II attached.

"It is dug up and pounded in a wooden mortar with a pestle and strained through a sieve made of bamboo, usually shallow, with the bottom perforated to separate extraneous matter.

"A little water is mixed up till it becomes tenacious and then rolled with both hands to the thickness of a finger and the length of 1 foot. This prepared clay is put round the rim of a wooden wheelshaped circular frame, 6 inches in diameter, and a hollow bamboo is attached to the centre of the frame and inserted on a stick fixed to the ground.

Sheet I A. "The wheel spins round and on it the clay is shaped by the hand of the potter with a piece of rag soaked in water.

"The goblets are made up in four parts and then left to dry. The outturn is estimated at five or six goblets a day, and they are sold at four annas each. About 25 or 30 are put at a time in an oven hollowed out in the ground and fired the whole day.

"The ornamentation on the goblets is effected by an instrument having a little wheel with sharp points secured to the bamboo.

"The manufacture of pottery at Mètharut and Naungla villages, though limited at present, is entirely in the hands of Shans and consists of—

Sheet I.	Goblet	... Nos. 1, 2, 4
	Tea-pot	... No. 3
Sheet II.	Spittoon	... Nos. 1, 3
	Finger-bowls ...	... No. 2
	Kaung liquor jars ...	... Nos. 4, 5
	Flower vases ...	... No. 6
	Sugar or pickle jars ...	... No. 7
	Water-jugs ...	... No. 8

Oil-cups used for lighting pagodas, monasteries, &c., during festivals.

"The expenses are not heavy, averaging Rs. 11 per month to feed his (potter's) family of three children. Add to this the purchase of clothing which would probably cost Rs. 5; in all Rs. 16 a month, while the income gives about Rs. 30 a month.

"Pottery is said to have been first manufactured in Upper Burma. The tea-pots manufactured are, it is believed, modelled after the Chinese pattern.

"Upper Burma has commercial relations with China by means of caravans. It is the general opinion here that the frequent visits of Chinese traders may have probably brought the use of earthenware to Burma, but at what time it is not at present very easy to determine."

(*b*) Upper Burma.

9. The town of Pyinmana in the Yamèthin district is noted for its ornamental pottery. The clay used is of a darkish grey colour curiously mottled with rust-coloured spots, and is found on the banks of the Ngalaik chaung. Colonel W. F. H. Grey, Deputy Commissioner, writes—

"I forward three photographs * showing different shapes in which these latter articles (flower-pots and stands) are made. To prevent mistakes it may be well to note that the stands and vases in the photographs are approximately one-fifth of the actual size.

"The finished articles may be either dark, the colour of an ordinary Pegu jar, or a light yellow. To obtain the latter colour a thin coating of a material, which may be Fuller's earth or kaolin clay, is smeared over it after it has been shaped and before the glazing is applied. It is at this stage also that patches of colour are applied for further ornamentation. These are obtained by rubbing on the surface of the clay pounded sulphate of copper or blue vitriol. After the final burning the parts so heated appear green on the yellow ground, a result which seems to afford pleasure to the native mind. Ornamentation more in accordance with Western ideas is effected by the tracing of more or less intricate patterns in lines and curves and sometimes in holes punched out of the still plastic material. The glaze is obtained by the application of pounded slag or metal refuse or ore mixed with rice-water till a viscid fluid is obtained, with which the whole surface is carefully coated before the burning. This final operation has to be conducted with great care and circumspection, the clay (unlike that used for ordinary pottery) being apt to crack and fly if it is heated either too quickly or unevenly. It is somewhat surprising, considering the scarcity of the clay and the troublesome nature of the work, that the products can be sold as cheaply as they are. Flower-pots with stands, similar to those illustrated, can be purchased for Re. 1 to Rs. 2 each, but are only made now on receipt of wholesale orders."

10. If kaolin occurs in Pyinmana, it may be worth while to see whether any porcelain can be locally manufactured. The reports furnished from the Mandalay district are somewhat meagre. There are large pottery works at Singu, but no reports about them have been received. At Shwebo two kinds of clay occur, namely, red and black. The red colour is due, no doubt, to its ferruginous constituents, and the black to its containing organic matter. The toys made at Shwedaik

* These have now been lithographed because of the prohibitive cost of their reproduction.

tusks like those of a wild boar. The king himself was not aware that he had any tusks, so when the ambassador told him that he had a pair of tusks he was quite astounded. By means of this announcement the ambassador gained the complete confidence of the simple-minded Arakanese King. As time wore on, the ambassador one day told him that his power and glory would increase if he shortened the length of the drum, that treasures would be found if trenches were dug in certain parts of the city, and that the king's tusks should be cut off. Further, the ambassador resolved to pollute the water used in Sandoway, but was baffled in his nefarious project owing to the jars having narrow mouths. *He, therefore, advised the king to command the supersession of the existing jars by those having wide mouths, and the foolish king did as he was told by the wicked ambassador.* The result was that the king gradually lost his power, the city lost its power of flying, the water was polluted, and the country passed into the hands of the wily Burmans."

Uses of pottery :

14. The form, shape, and size of pottery are determined by the use the articles are put to. Such uses may be broadly divided into (*a*) religious, (*b*) ceremonial, and (*c*) domestic.

(*a*) Religious.

15. The principal articles used for religious purposes are the flower vases generally met with on pagodas, the well-known black glossy alms-bowl of the Buddhist monks, and the little circular lamps lighted at the end of each Buddhist Lent. Much care and ingenuity are bestowed upon the manufacture of vases and alms-bowls. The former is red ware, while the latter is black ware. The black colour is obtained by smearing the green pots with sessamum oil and baking them in huge jars.

(*b*) Ceremonial.

16. With the advent of Western civilization and its attendant luxuries and a higher standard of material comfort, the Burmans, in common with other orientals subject to British rule, have been obliged to study economy and to curtail their complicated ceremonials. Weddings are no longer so expensive as they were before, but respectable families, especially in Arakan and Upper Burma, still observe the time-honoured custom of having the bride and bridegroom eat out of a common earthenware bowl. Such bowls are now not exposed for sale, but are made to order as occasion arises. This custom of eating together, which still prevails in China, reminds one of the ancient Roman custom of *confarreatio*. The funeral urn (Fig. 10) has been referred to in paragraph 8. The custom of preserving in urns the charred bones of one's parents or ancestors and paying them the same adoration and devotion as is done to Gautama Buddha is dying out as it is discountenanced by strict and

orthodox Buddhists. Ancestral worship, which still prevails in India, China, and Japan, appears to be one of the primitive forms of faith in Burma. The kings of the Alompra dynasty showed their devotion to the *manes* of their ancestors by adoring their material representations in gold.

17. The domestic utensils do not call for any special remark. They consist mainly of cooking-pots, water-jars, goblets, flowerpots, and lamps of curious shape, which are still used in places where kerosine oil has not yet been introduced. Tobacco pipes, which were largely used a generation ago, are no longer manufactured, and will soon pass into oblivion to be objects of interest to the historian or the lover of antiquities.

(*c*) Domestic.

18. Earthenware pottery is of two kinds : (*a*) unglazed ware, and (*b*) glazed ware. It is a notable fact that the art of glazing is unknown in Bengal, and that it is not commonly practised in the Panjab. It is generally supposed that the art was introduced into India by the Mughal invaders from China through Persia. It is evident that glazing was practised in Burma centuries ago, and that it was acquired from the Chinese either directly or through the Shans.

Kinds of pottery and mode of manufacture :

19. This is manufactured from ordinary alluvial clay mixed with fine sand and kneaded with the feet on a cow-hide. The prepared clay is made into balls or *pindas* of a size sufficient for making pots of the dimensions required. Each ball is put on the wheel, whose history is more ancient than the days of Jeremiah, and when the desired size has been obtained, the green pot is cut off neatly with a string. It is then dried in the sun for a day and beaten into shape with a plain wooden mallet. During this process a wooden or earthenware mould is placed inside the pot to serve the same purpose as an anvil. Ornamentation now begins by beating it with mallets with floral or other patterns, and the blank spaces are smoothed over with the gônnyin seed *(Entada pursœtha)*. The green pot is now ready to be baked, but the baking is not carried out till a large number are ready. There is no proper kiln. The pots are completely covered with straw and the whole heap is coated with clay and fired. The fuel used is either bamboo or wood. The red ware is obtained by baking in the above manner. If black ware is required, bran is poured on the burning heap and the pots are coloured by the smoke. From 150 to 500 pots are generally baked together.

(*a*) Unglazed ware.

20. The photographs* (Figs. 16—27) illustrate the different stages in the process of making pottery. They were supplied by Mr. J. A. Barry, Subdivisional Officer in the Lower Chindwin district.

21. The following figures give a rough estimate of the profit and loss of the industry. If 300 pots are baked, the cost of—

	Rs.
Clay	3
Straw	1
Fuel	3
Total ...	7

The average value realized is about Rs. 3 per 100 pots, and the proceeds of the sale will amount to Rs. 9. The net profit will, therefore, be Rs. 2. A single woman would take about 15 days to make and bake the 300 pots, and the income of Rs. 4 a month is not very reassuring. Besides, a liberal allowance for breakage, sometimes to the extent of 30 per cent., has to be made. Unless the clay and the straw and a good portion of the wood-fuel are obtained free of cost, the margin of profit will be considerably restricted, and the labour given will be merely a labour of love, which poor folks leading a hand-to-mouth existence can hardly be expected to indulge in too freely.

(*b*) Glazed ware.

22. Glazed pottery is a more profitable industry. There is less breakage and each kiln will realize about Rs. 100. The only essential difference in the mode of manufacture is the smearing of the green pots with *chaw* or *bwet* described in paragraph 11. The following is a rough estimate of the profit and loss of the industry:—

	Rs.
Labour in digging up clay and cartage	25
Fee for pounding clay in a mortar	10
Cost of fuel	10
Fee to one foreman and two assistants	30
Total ...	75
Allowance for breakage ...	5
Grand Total ...	80

The net profit will thus be about Rs. 20. Glazed toys are made by the family of the potter and their manufacture en-

* Lithographed.

tails no additional expense. The proceeds realized by their sale are a net gain.

23. The glazed tiles and terra-cotta tablets are of antiquarian interest. They are found mostly at Tagaung, Pagan, Prome, and Pegu, the ancient capitals of Burma. A few specimens may be seen at the Phayre Museum, Rangoon. They are described at pages 29—31 of Major Temple's *Notes on Antiquities in Ramaññadesa.*

II.—GLASSWARE.

Glassware.

24. Glassware is not an indigenous industry. There may be a few Chinese and other foreigners engaged in glass-blowing at Rangoon, but no reports on the industry have been received from any district.

BURMA SECRETARIAT: }
The 25th July 1895. }

G. B. C. P. O.—No. 5216, B. S., 19-9-95—250.

No. 1.

No. 2.

No. 3

No. 7.

No. 8.

No. 10.

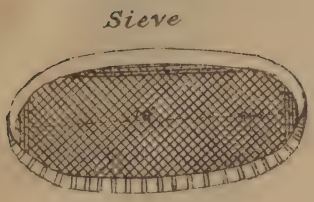
No. 4.

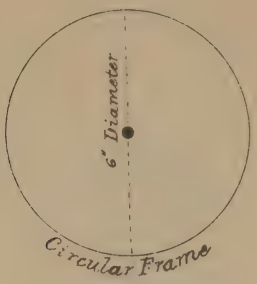
No. 5.

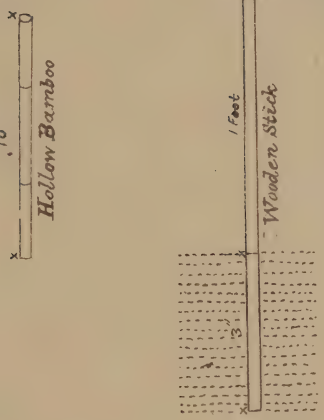
No 8.

No 9

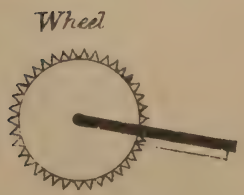
SHEET I. A







SCALE: 2" INCHES = 1 FOOT



PAPUN POTTERY

SHEET I.

No. 1.

No. 2.

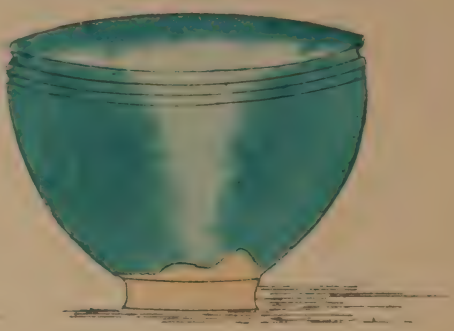
SCALE: 4 INCHES = 1 FOOT.

No. 3.

No. 4.

PAPUN POTTERY.

No. 1.



No. 2.

No. 3.

SCALE :

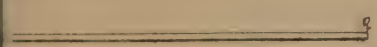
No. 4.

T II.

No. 5.

No. 6.

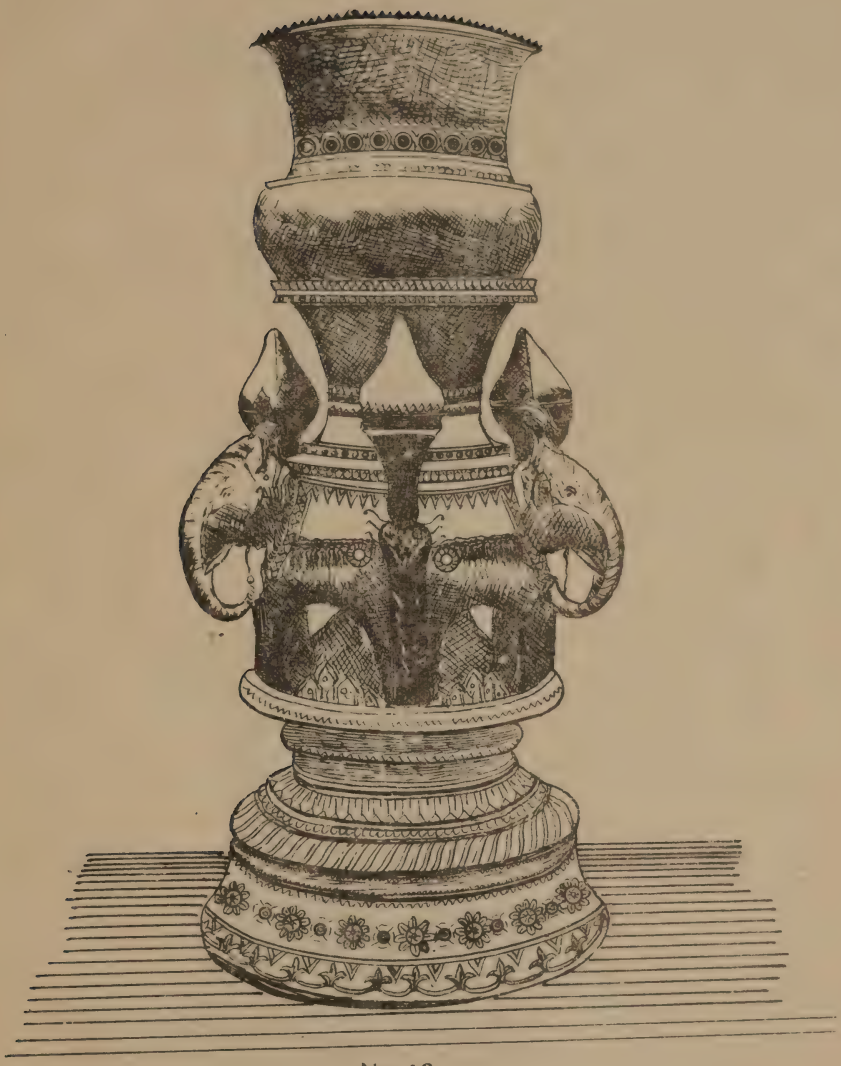
HES = 1 FOOT



No. 7.

No. 8.

TERY



No. 12.

FANCY POTTERY OF PYINMANA.

No. 13.
FANCY POTTERY OF PYINMANA.

16. THE DWELLINGS OF POTTERS.

18. BREAKING THE CLODS AND SIFTING.

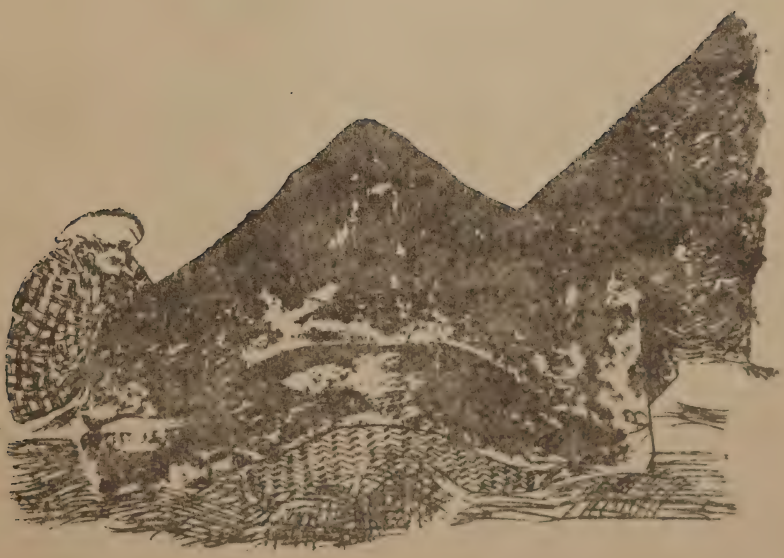
17. DIGGING AND PUTTING INTO A CART CLAY TO BE USED FOR MAKING POTTERY

19. POURING WATER INTO POTS CONTAINING CLAY.

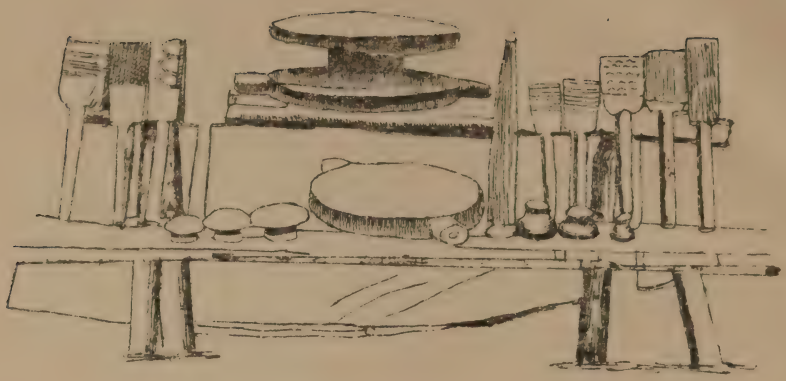
20. KNEADING CLAY ON A COW-HIDE.

21. MAKING POTS ON A POTTER'S WHEEL.

22. SHAPING A POT WITH A WOODEN MALLET.



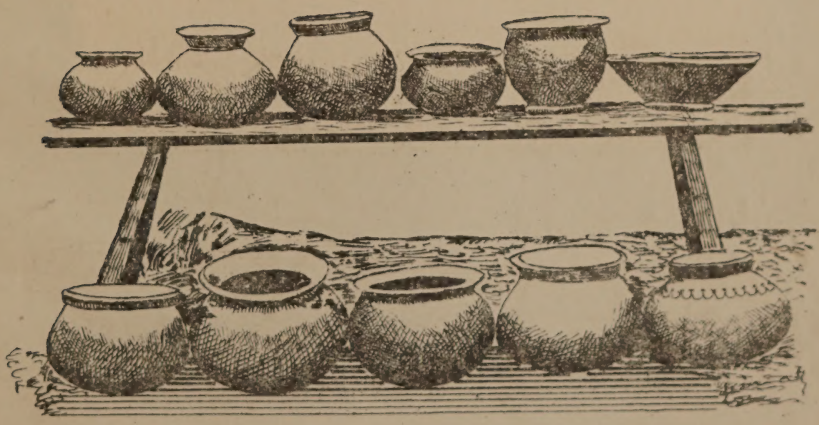
23. A POT-KILN.



24. POTTER'S WHEEL AND OTHER IMPLEMENTS.

25.—DIFFERENT KINDS OF POTS MADE IN THE BUDALIN SUBDIVISION OF THE LOWER CHINDWIN DISTRICT.

26- DIFFERENT KINDS OF POTS MADE IN THE BUDALIN SUBDIVISION OF THE LOWER CHINDWIN DISTRICT.



27-DIFFERENT KINDS OF POTS MADE IN THE BUDALIN SUBDIVISION OF THE LOWER CHINDWIN DISTRICT.